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KATS

Hazards target of cleanup at day-care site

City promises remedy of landfill at Howard

By Novelda Sommers
The Chattanooga Times

7/19/96

Children at a day-care center on the Howard campus will be safer this fall after contaminated soil is removed from the playground.

Workers will replace 18 inches of coal-tar contaminated soil with fresh soil near the day care, which sits on property that was a landfill in the 1970s.

Ferman Miller, environmental protection specialist and project manager, said concentrations of cancer-causing substances in the soil were low, but still above acceptable levels.

The soil could pose a threat if it entered the body, and children have been known to have less-than-discriminating tastes when it comes to soil.

"We want to eliminate that danger," Miller said.

The landfill has been named to the Superfund Division's Voluntary Oversight and Assistance Program, which means the city has agreed to spend its money and use its resources to reduce health threats in the area. Miller said the project should be completed by Thanksgiving if weather permits.

Eugene Wright, who is overseeing the

Public hearing

■ The Department of Environment and Conservation will hold a public hearing about the cleanup if there is enough interest before Aug. 16.

Residents can send written comments to Phillip Hendricks, VOAP Community Relations Coordinator, Division of Superfund, Fourth Floor, 401 Church St., Nashville, Tenn. 37234.

cleanup for the city, said officials would know the cost after bids have been sent out and contracts awarded. Bids go out next week.

The city will reduce several environmental hazards at the site. In the 1970s, 44 acres east of the Howard School of Academics and Technology were used as a landfill for demolition waste, mostly building materials like wood and concrete. But hazardous materials from factories might have been dumped there, too, Miller said.

Soil will only be removed from a portion of the landfill near the day care, where the dangerous compounds were discovered. Another section will be topped with fresh clay and fenced off.

A leaky sewer line near nature trails on the property also will be repaired and the trails covered with gravel.



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Landfill Cleanup OK'd For Howard

By KEN LEYON SPEAR

Free Press Staff Writer 7/18/96

A major cleanup of the inactive landfill on the campus of the Howard School of Academics and Technology is hoped to be completed by the end of the year, a state environmental official said.

The Howard High landfill has been accepted into the Superfund Division's Voluntary Cleanup, Oversight and Assistance Program (VOAP), which allows an investigation and cleanup of an inactive hazardous substance site.

After a meeting with her constituents at Howard two years ago, state Rep. Tommie Brown took a walk across the campus and didn't like what she smelled.

A "foul-smelling liquid" apparently from underground was seeping around the nature trail near the high school.

"It was obvious that we had serious problems," said Rep. Brown, adding that a number of citizens had complained of the stench that usually hovers over the area after rainfall.

The two-term legislator, who sat on the state's Conservation and Environment committee, picked up the telephone and started pushing buttons. She also took a contingency of citizens and students from the Alton Park, Piney Woods and Howard areas to Nashville to testify before the committee in 1994.

An investigation was launched in 1995 by Associated Environmental Services to remedy the

problem.

And a major cleanup is expected to be completed by the end of this year, according to F.D. Miller, assistant manager for the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation's local Superfund Division office.

Between 1972-77, the 20-acre former restricted landfill, which sits east of the school building, was used primarily for demolition waste.

During the initial investigation, an underground sewage pipeline



was found to be the culprit. Mr. Miller said the pipeline was broken and was "oozing out this gray-colored, foul-smelling water."

Superfund Division officials have negotiated with the city of Chattanooga's Public Works Department to get the pipeline repaired, he added.

"In the meantime, other environmental and health-related issues were found associated with the larger Howard High landfill area," Mr. Miller said.

Rep. Brown said, "I was appalled that our young healthy children were permitted to play in the area and unsuspecting parents sent their children to school to play around all that contamination."

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their neighborhoods.

"We are trying to interact with experts, and we do not have the same type of expertise. It's difficult to determine whether the information you are receiving is correct, adequate or in your best interest," Rep. Brown said. "My goal is to try and put together a technical team to serve those citizens. They have been the victims. I want them to now become the victors ... and make sure that when they give consent, it's informed consent."

"I'm pleased to know that some

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"We as a community have done this to these children over the years," she added. "Sending them out there is almost like giving them a death sentence. This is criminal."

Even more disturbing to the lawmaker is that the citizens who are most affected do not have technical assistance. At a recent meeting, many residents were trying to analyze a technical report and make decisions about

Cleanup: May Be Finished By Year's End

movement is made now," she said.

The action plan, according to DSF, is to:

- Remove contaminated soil from the vicinity of the school's neighboring Teen Learning Center, which contains a day care facility.

The soil there has a "concentration of compounds which have health risks," Mr. Miller said. "To be on the safe side," 18 inches of the contaminated soil will be excavated, and replaced with six inches of clay, a plastic covering topped with another soil covering.

- Repair the Nature Trail by installing gravel and other improvements to make trail "more attractive" to the students and the community.

- Improve the stormwater

drainage on the football practice field, which is west of the stadium.

- Improve the cap on the landfill and further restrict access to the landfill site by fencing the boundary and placing warning signs there.

Mr. Miller said that DSF is accepting written public comments on the feasibility study until Aug. 16. If there's enough public interest, a public meeting can be requested or interested parties can be placed on a mailing list for future site information.

"It sounds like there's a good chance of that being completed by the end of this year," he said, "but the Superfund process is kind of slow. We have these comment periods. That's where we are right now."